

VZCZCXRO9747  
RR RUEHLH RUEHPW  
DE RUEHLH #0156/01 2110241  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 300241Z JUL 09  
FM AMCONSUL LAHORE  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4120  
INFO RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 4825  
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI 2120  
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR 1800  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 0841  
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 0462  
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE 5275

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 LAHORE 000156

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KIRF](#) [PGOV](#) [KISL](#) [PK](#)

SUBJECT: FEMALE MADRASSAHS IN PUNJAB PREPARE WOMEN FOR THE HOME

¶1. (SBU) Summary. Poloff visits to three female Ahl-e-Hadith madrassahs in Punjab has shown that they provide Islamic studies, Quran memorization and basic life skills training, but little else to prepare women for an independent life. Aside from the Quran, girls learn to cook, clean and sew; they tend not to pursue higher education. Local donors including Parliamentarians support the religious schools, which lack basic resources such as books and furniture. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Over 15,000 registered madrassahs in Pakistan provide education to over two million students, according to press. Estimates of unregistered madrassahs are as high as 40,000. A 2008 report by C. Christine Fair of Rand Corporation concluded there are almost 700,000 madrassah students in Punjab; over half attend Deobandi or Salafi madrassahs. Bahawalpur district in south Punjab, followed by Lahore and Bahawalnagar districts have the largest number of schools, according to the report.

¶3. (SBU) During a May 12 visit to Madrassah Darul Islah in Hail village in Gujrat district in northern Punjab, poloff inaugurated a sewing center with eight sewing machines for teaching embroidery to the students as well as members of the village. Six teachers at Darul Islah provide free instruction in Arabic and religious studies to 200 female students. Registered with the government, the school features classroom instruction in the morning and vocational training in the afternoon. A separate facility teaches 200 boys on the same grounds. The school does not provide boarding and classrooms are sparse with wooden benches and rugs for student use. Poloff did not see any chalkboards or teaching materials.

¶4. (SBU) Qazi Abdul Qadeer Khamosh, whose father founded and provided land for the madrassah, told poloff that local donors support on-going operations of the school. School buildings comprise part of the family compound, with separate buildings for men and women. Perimeter compound walls ensure privacy of the women faculty and students. Curtains cover the entrance to the female compound to keep women out of sight. In addition to these measures, teachers wear the niqab, or face covering, while interacting with the students. Depending on their age, students may wear the niqab but always wear a hijab or chadar, or head scarf. Over 500 graduates from the school live overseas and, he estimated, about 40 percent of the village has relatives in places such as Denmark and Sweden.

- - -  
Urban Madrassah Provides Basic Islamic Education  
- - -

¶5. (SBU) Jamia Islamia Lilbanat in Lahore provides education based on the curriculum of Wafaq-ul Madrassahs Al-Salafia, a school of thought associated with the Salafi fundamentalist Ahl-e Hadith, to 235 female and 40 male students. Twelve teachers instruct Islamic studies, which consists primarily of memorization of the Quran, but the school does not offer

boarding facilities. Government school students receive training in Islamic studies in the afternoon at the madrassah. The school does not offer any vocational skill training and poloff did not observe library facilities. Primary classes are held in one large room without physical division of classrooms. Teachers and students cluster in a U-shape pattern on the floor in small groups based on age and grade with short benches to hold the Quran. Secondary classes are held in small classrooms with the same setup. Poloff did not observe any chalkboards or visual teaching aides. School principal Mamoon Qudus told poloff June 1 that students receive basic Islamic education until age 13 and then progress to learning basic Arabic and interpretation of the Quran. She shared that 5-10 percent of the students get degrees and apply to mainstream colleges. She estimated that ten percent of the students open their own madrassahs upon completion of their studies. The annual budget of the school, according to the principal, is Rs 610,000, most of which goes toward building maintenance as teachers work on a voluntary basis. As the school is in a very poor neighborhood, the madrassah provides food to families during Ramadan, the principal said.

- - -  
"Mother of Religious Schools"  
- - -

16. (SBU) Over 1100 female students attend Jamia Taleem Ul Quran Wal Hadith in Gujranwala city, a two-hour drive north of Lahore.

According to a school brochure, the school opened in 1960 "to save our youth from overwhelming attack of Western culture" as a "modern institution where Quran and Sunnah are taught in a modern way so girls could become practical Muslims." Started as a one-room school, the madrassah is now referred to as "umm al

LAHORE 00000156 002 OF 002

madaris," or "mother of religious schools," because of its "superb performance," the brochure continues. More than 6,000 girls have graduated from the school and many "are serving the cause of religion by propagation of faith in Kashmir, Northern Areas and foreign countries," the brochure states. Inaugurated in 1998 by Imam-e-Kaba Sheikh Mohammad Bin Abdullah AlSabil Mecca Mukkharrama of Saudi Arabia, the hostel boards 750 students. The 32 classrooms transform into boarding facilities at night to accommodate between 12-15 students per room, Principal Barira Rahim told poloff on July 7. Poloff observed the rooms were about ten by twelve feet in size and had several small cupboards for students to store their belongings. Other than rugs to sleep on, the rooms did not have furniture. The compound, integrated into the city surroundings, contains a network of buildings that include a large auditorium for prayer gatherings, administrative offices and classrooms.

17. (SBU) Forty-three teachers, all graduates of this institution, provide instruction in Islamic studies and basic Arabic. When asked about other courses, administrators insisted that students receive science, history and English class, but poloff only observed students memorizing the Quran. The extensive library, locked when poloff arrived, holds mostly books and cassettes on Islam, including interpretations of the Quran and the Hadiths. Poloff did not see contemporary science, history or geography books (madrassahs often use classical Arabic texts). The principal assured poloff that the girls are properly trained in cooking and cleaning as they have responsibility for the upkeep of the school. "The girls are trained to take care of needs such as washing of clothes and cleaning of the rooms," she said. White, purple, blue and red chadors identify the course level of the girls, which are provided by the school as part of their uniform. Administrators told poloff that the school trains its female students to fabricate handicrafts such as embroidery and painting, but poloff did not observe sewing machines or materials for these crafts. According to the school brochure, the school provided 566 girls a marriage package of essential household items.

18. (SBU) The annual budget of the school is 15 million rupees. Administrators estimate it costs Rs 50 per day to provide food

to each girl. Donations from local donors, primarily zakat (obligatory Muslim charity), finance the school. Jamiat Ahya-E-Altaras Ul Islam donated the 19,000 Dinars that purchased the land, according to the school brochure. (Comment: Post could not confirm the origins of this party but confirmed that it was not based in Pakistan. End comment). This same organization also contributed 5,000 Dinars for construction of a water tank at the school. Member of the Provincial Assembly (MPA) Usman Ibrahim told poloff during the visit that he had contributed Rs 100,000 from his discretionary fund to provide books for the library. Imran Ullah, Member of the National Assembly (MNA), personally contributed Rs 8,000 to lay gas pipelines for heating water. The school has started to seek funds for a computer laboratory and an FM radio station, administrators said. (Note. The school brochure noted contributions were made in Dinars, not which type of Dinar. End note)

- - -  
Background: Qazi Abdul Qadeer Khamosh  
- - -

¶9. Qazi Abdul Qadeer Khamosh facilitated the madrassah visits for poloff. Khamosh, active in interfaith dialogue throughout Pakistan and abroad, organizes interfaith meetings, cultural workshops and training sessions for religious leaders and female madrassah teachers. At a July 16 workshop attended by poloff, the discussion focused on the role of teachers to project a positive image to their students and, the responsibility of female teachers to instill the peaceful message of Islam in their students.

¶10. (SBU) Comment. Female madrassah education offers an extremely narrow curriculum focused on Islamic studies, memorization of the Quran and domestic skill-training. Despite the narrow focus, these institutions provide basic literacy skills, socialization and vocational training to women who may not have access to education. With trained teachers, moderate curriculum reforms and monitoring, existing institutions can provide basic education to a neglected part of the population. End Comment.  
LOWE